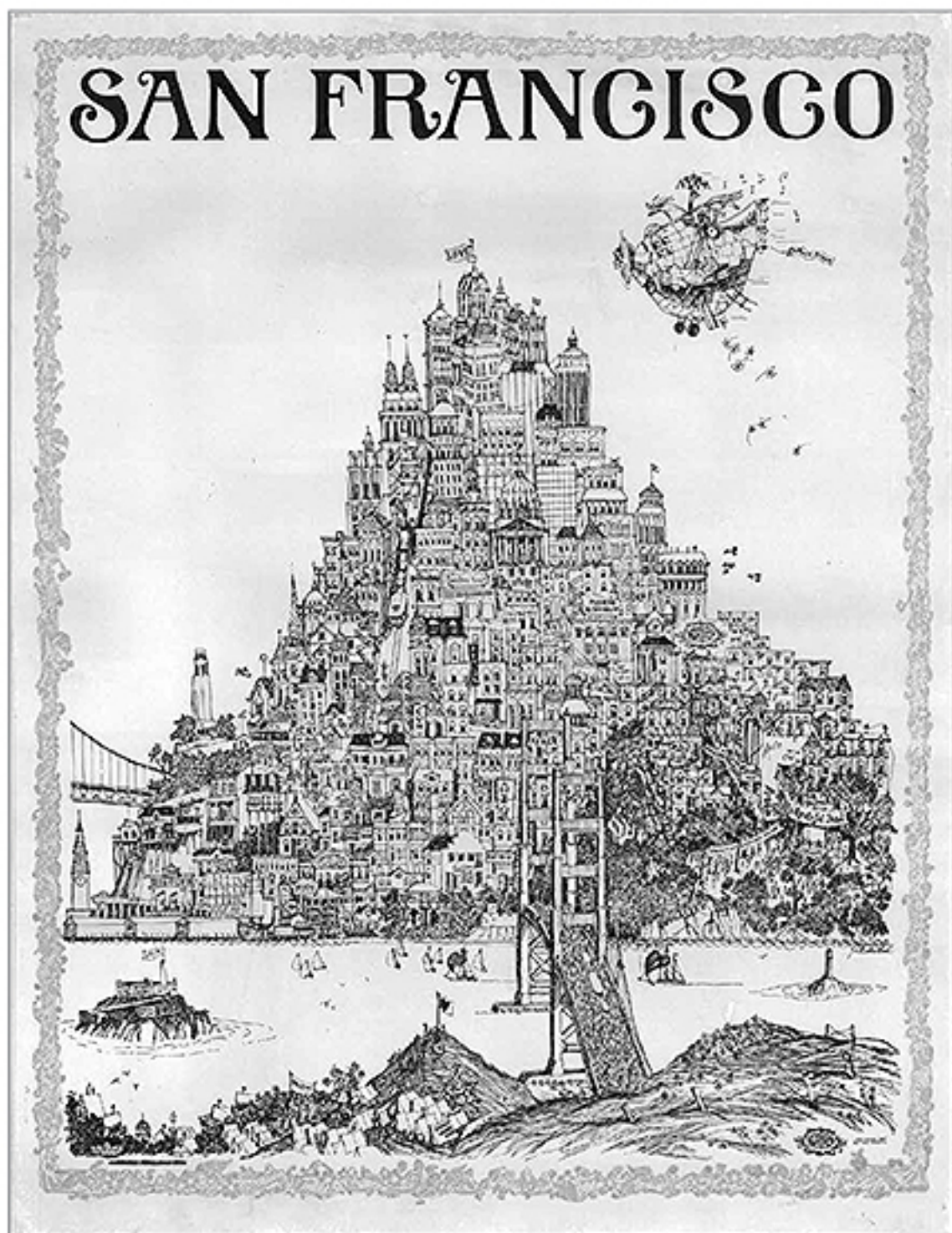


# The Semaphore

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WHERE DO WE COME FROM?  
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

# THE SPEAKEASY: A NIGHT IN SAN FRANCISCO'S ROARING '20S

by C J Verburg with Jean and Catz Forsman

**Y**ou have a watch repair appointment tomorrow night.

That's the first cryptic message slipped through my cyber-mail slot by *The Speakeasy*. It's a reminder that this is Prohibition we're stepping into. From 1920-1933, buying drinks in a nightclub wasn't just breaking the law but the Constitution. Shh! If the feds find out what we're up to, we're history.

We're history anyway, since *The Speakeasy's* immersive theater starts with period costumes. If you can't deck yourself out in a flapper's beaded dress and headband or a natty suit and fedora, you may be re-togged at the club

But first we have to get in. Step One: meet a woman in red trenchcoat on a certain North Beach street corner and ask her a certain question. She directs us to a watch-repair shop nearby, where a surly bouncer guards the oh-so-secret entrance.

And suddenly it's the Roaring '20s! Scantly clad girls are prancing behind ostrich-plumed fans on a cabaret stage, while roulette wheels and card games get under way in the casino, and dramas erupt in the bar. Through windows in the hallways of this maze we peep and eavesdrop: In the office, the club owner and his wife are arguing. In the dressing room, the star singer threatens to start a slapping match with a chorus girl.

The joint is jumping! Cocktails appear and disappear. So do gamblers, showgirls, and customers. An emcee tells punchy jokes, a jazz combo plays zippy old and new favorites, drunks lurch, a reporter gets the boot. Something from the sandwich cart? No thanks. We watch the show for a while from ringside seats in the cabaret, stroll through the hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye action in the casino, and almost get caught up in a fight among the lost or pugnacious souls spilling out their stories in the bar. The only thing missing is a cigarette girl.

My involvement in theater and storytelling goes back to childhood; I vividly remember my sister and me acting out our own version of the TV show *The Roaring Twenties*, singing about Prohibition and bathtub gin long before we had any idea what they were. Now that it's almost a century since the U.S. passed the only Constitutional amendment it later repealed, *The Speakeasy* has a slightly different role from its namesakes. This is storytelling in action—a grownup version of the make-believe history my sister and I performed for our stunned parents. 35 local actors, plus almost as many offstage crew members, are paid (yesss!!!) to steer a nightly crowd of participant-spectators through this 3-D real-time labyrinth of illusion.

How does it work? Not just for the audience, but for the experts whose clockwork precision creates a virtual world every Friday and Saturday night. (Thursday shows will resume in September.) I asked two of the performers: my longtime Telegraph Hill neighbors and Bay Area actors Jean and Catz Forsman.

**Semaphore:** How did you get into this? How long have you done it? Do you always play the same roles?

**Jean:** I know [creator and coproducer] Nick Olivero and [general manager] David Gluck from working with them on *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. . . . Nick had sug-



Catz and Jean Forsman check out the Tenderloin Speakeasy.



Robert Faltisco with Jean Forsman as Ruth.

PHOTO BY PETER LIU

gested that I come see that show (it was a pretty bawdy production) to make sure it was something I'd be comfortable doing, and . . . I was inspired by the fearlessness and heart of the *Hedwig* artists. I began hearing about *The Speakeasy* while in *Hedwig* as Nick was developing the script. Because of other commitments I was unable to audition for either the initial run in the Tenderloin or for the beginning of the North Beach incarnation. I auditioned and was folded into the action a month or so after the show opened. I've been involved off and on for the past year and a half and have hugely enjoyed myself. The adventure grew even more delightful for me once Catz joined the show.

**Catz:** I've been working for the Speakeasy since August of last year. I started as the character named Tom. Tom stays on his barstool the entire night with a huge 1923 edition of the *Chronicle*—a very expensive prop which wears out with extensive use. It's reprinted from the day, fascinating. Tom doesn't shut up, the opposite of me, I'm pretty quiet. From him you'll hear about modern art history, World War I, selling soap door to door, and on and on and on. Now I'm playing George, husband of Ruth (played by my wife Jeanie). They're a couple of rubes from Concord, parents of a son killed in World War I, looking for a chorus girl they have a letter for.

**Jean:** As Ruth and George, we're a sheltered farm couple coming to San Francisco and the Speakeasy



Gamblers in the Casino.

PHOTO BY ANDY FEIFAREK

hoping to find a specific chorus girl that our late son was enamored with and deliver a letter from him to her. At some point in 2019, I'll also begin covering a very savvy, street-smart character whose life is the opposite of Ruth's and boy o boy will that be fun!

**Semaphore:** How much has the show changed over time? Does it still change?

**Jean:** The producers are constantly casting, the cast rotates, and each new cast member brings a fresh perspective. The audience's reactions and interactions keep all of us focused and loose. Everyone involved — the performers, servers, musicians, security — brings his or her gifts to the table and the production and character arcs are always evolving.

**Semaphore:** What are the most striking differences between *The Speakeasy* and traditional theater?

**Catz:** "Immersive" theater is a new and interesting phenomenon. Because the audience has the ability to communicate with the players, it's challenging to remain in 1923 and improv with them. It's a fantastic and copacetic family, *The Speakeasy*. I'm enjoying every minute.

**Jean:** I love seeing dressed up, happy crowds in our neighborhood. And I really love sharing these experiences with Catz. We've worked together in other productions, but this is only the second time we've played a married couple on stage. It's a hoot! Catz and I are both on a break, but we're coming back to the production beginning July 11th.



Catz Forsman as Tom and Dominick Palamenti as Mac.

PHOTO BY PETER LIU



Nathan Marken as Eddie the emcee onstage in the Cabaret with chorus girls.

PHOTO BY PETER LIU



The joint is jumpin'!

PHOTO BY PETER LIU





## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Judy Irving  
president@thd.org

C.J. Schake, a local artist/photographer, “currently secures a modest wage working as a host and elevator operator at the slightly understated and insistently iconic Coit Tower.” She came to THD’s annual meeting “to share her inner journey and outer visual love of the tower and this glorious place that is our home” (quotes from her bio). Some of those stunning images are reproduced here. C.J.’s talk was mesmerizing: unscripted, meditative, insightful. It’s a thrill to know that we have artists of this caliber in our midst, showing us, in a new light, what we think we already know. All of her photos, believe it or not, were taken with her iPhone.

Her talk and slide show were timed to focus attention on Coit Tower, which has recently been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. Actually, re-nominated: In 2008 a previous application was submitted and accepted. However, the newly revised nomination argues that Coit Tower is nationally significant (or significant at the national level), a fact that was missing from the earlier nomination.

Last winter THD wrote a letter to San Francisco’s Historic Preservation Commission in support of the revised nomination. After the City approved it, the nomination moved to the State Historic Resources Commission in Sacramento, where it was unanimously approved. It is currently being vetted by National Register reviewers in the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the National Park Service. Thanks go to the non-profit activist group Protect Coit Tower (founded by Jon Golinger) and to architectural historian Katherine Petrin for getting us this far! The rest of the timeline is unclear, but we hope Coit Tower is well on its way to long-deserved national recognition.

You may not have visited the Tower in ages. Here are some reasons why you might want to go back (from the National Register nomination): The Coit Tower murals depict the high ideals and social values of the 1930s as expressed in New Deal art projects; they represent the collective effort of individuals in creating an exceptionally important artwork, one that focused on the reality of American life during the Great Depression while drawing upon the techniques of the Mexican muralists. As has been noted by prominent 20th century art critics, scholars, and historians, no other Public Works of Art Project is comparable in terms of its scale of undertaking and legacy.

That artists would be paid by the Federal government to enhance public places like Coit Tower seems like an impossible dream given the current state of affairs in Washington, D.C., where yearly attempts are made to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts. In my own history as a filmmaker, I received an NEA grant 40 years ago for a documentary film about the

# COIT TOWER NOMINATED FOR NATIONAL REGISTER



nuclear industry. Think that would happen now?! Coit Tower is worth another look, if only to remind us of projects that Federal spending could, should, and did support.

### The Embarcadero Seawall is Cracking

Although not an historic landmark, San Francisco’s Embarcadero Seawall is even older than Coit Tower. Built a century ago, the Seawall, which runs three miles from Fisherman’s Wharf to Mission Creek, is built mostly on “Young Bay Mud,” a weak, saturated, compressible marine clay. When you’re on the Embarcadero you’re essentially traveling on top of this old Seawall. It has already begun to crack, and is vulnerable to earthquakes and sea level rise. You’ll hear a lot more about the Seawall in the months to come, and you’ll vote on a bond measure that would provide initial funding to repair the most vulnerable sections. A major earthquake would cause the Seawall to settle and “move outward toward the Bay,” according to the Port’s website. Wow. What an image.

### Earthquakes and Vacant Storefronts

The threat of a large earthquake, predicted within the next 30 years, has also indirectly affected business vacancies in North Beach. The Telegraph Hill Dwellers, North Beach Neighbors, and others concerned about retail vacancies now know why this has been happening: Fires? Yes. Caffè Puccini, Union Street. Soft-story (ground-floor) earthquake retrofit evictions? Yes. Other reasons? Yes. See Nancy Shanahan’s summary of find-

ings from a just-completed Vacancy Survey on p. 8. We are indebted to local photographer Dennis Hearne and artist Elizabeth Ashcroft for helping us see what we have, and what we’ve lost. One of the places I really miss is l’Osteria del Forno, a small, authentic Italian restaurant that was forced to vacate for a required soft-story retrofit by the landlord. Faced with a year or two of being in limbo, waiting to get back into their space on Columbus Avenue, the owners decided instead to retire. And we lost what to my mind was the best Italian restaurant in North Beach: an unintended consequence of strengthening buildings against earthquakes.

### Benefit for Burned-Out Union Street Businesses

See Bob Berryman’s report on our recent “Summer Social” (p. 12), which benefitted the five businesses on Union Street between Columbus and Powell that lost their spaces to the big March fire.

### Authors’ Event Rescheduled

Fires, floods, and earthquakes have not prevented our new Art & Culture Chair, Anna Berryman, from reviving the local authors’ reading, postponed several months ago. It will be held at Chief Sullivan’s (formerly O’Reilly’s Irish Pub) at 622 Green Street on Tuesday, August 14, from 7 to 9 PM. See Anna’s report for details (p. 13). Support local writers! Acknowledge these artists who live in our midst: They, too, like C.J. Schake at Coit Tower, show us, in a new light, what we think we already know. ✦



I Heart San Francisco

PHOTO © C.J. SCHAKE



Mural detail (woman at rest) from *Outdoor Life* by Ben Cunningham

PHOTO © C.J. SCHAKE



Tourists at the Top

PHOTO © C.J. SCHAKE

# THD WELCOMES OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



**C**ap Caplan has been putting words in all the right places throughout her career: teaching mental health students how to counsel their clients; training managers to coach their employees; co-authoring *Survivors: How to Keep Your Best*

*People on Board After Downsizing*; writing and editing business communications as founder of ALLCAPS; and completing multi-paged adoption forms to bring Guinevere, Dudley, and now Ace to Telegraph Hill.

Cap loves Cafe Jacqueline, Caffe Sport, Doors Open, dog cookies at the fire station, Wash Park, and the people she meets every day.



**N**ick Ferris is a native North Beacher, having gone to school at SS Peter & Paul and spent much of his childhood at the Salesian Boys' & Girls' club. He spent the past decade in Boston for university and New York City at a tech startup. While he

loved NYC and its constant activity, he always wanted to move back to North Beach because of its special community and neighborhood vibe, which he sees as increasingly rare and is grateful to be a part of. Needless to say, he's thrilled to be back in the greatest city and neighborhood in the world!

Having co-founded the North Beach Farmers Market, and as the President of the North Beach Citizens' young professionals' organization, Filantropos, Nick is excited to get involved with THD and ensuring North Beach continues to preserve its friendly neighborhood vibe while supporting the evolving community.



**S**arah Kliban was born and raised in San Francisco, growing up in North Beach. She is a fifth-generation renter (!) and finds the idea of moving out of the neighborhood unacceptable at present. She has a strong sense of love

and loyalty to the neighborhood and has been inspired to neighborhood activism by her mother, Joan Wood, also a THD member. (Her parents met at Vesuvio Cafe where her mother was a waitress and her cartoonist father had a studio upstairs from City Lights.) She was a board member/Social Chair for THD for several years before taking a hiatus to have her son. On the professional side, she is a casting director for movies, television, industrials, and voice-over, as well as teaching auditioning. She is also a professional actor. Outside of work, she is committed to spending quality time with her family and instilling in her 5-year-old a love of our neighborhood and community.




**L**eah Lovelace, originally from Connecticut, has lived on the Hill for over a decade. She enjoys the charm and sense of community that is unique to Telegraph Hill. Becoming more aware and concerned about the issues that face

the city, Leah was honored to join the THD Board and contribute to their mission. Professionally, Leah has a thriving IT consulting business where she works with a wide range of companies when they need data center space, cloud and/or connectivity solutions. To engage her creative side, she is also a personal stylist for J. Hilburn, a men's custom clothing company. When not building her businesses, Leah enjoys playing tennis, sailing, skiing, and hiking with her yellow Lab. Leah is looking forward to giving back to her community through the work of THD.

Swissnex, on Pier 17, is Switzerland's hub in San Francisco for the exchange of global ideas and innovations (see Bulletin Board, p. 10). From May 17 through July 28, swissnex's featured exhibit was "Mental Work: Brain-Machine Interfaces: Towards a New Era of Human-Machine Interaction." Visitors could don electrode-studded EEG headsets and use motor imagery—imagining the contraction and movement of muscles of specific parts of the body—to activate and operate machines. At a fascinating symposium on May 19, Bay Area and international experts reported on their current work, including mentally controlled prosthetics, a tiny low-cost MRI device embedded in a chip, and the pros and cons of digitized (and therefore hackable) infrastructure and communications.

—CJ Verburg



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## DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

**T**hanks to the many of you who offered support for the victims of the North Beach Fire that erupted on St. Patrick's Day. The fire displaced 8 small businesses on the 500 block of Columbus Avenue and the 600 block of Union Street. Also displaced were 9 residential tenants in the 30-room SRO hotel at 575 Columbus next door, who have all been able to move back in thanks to the quick action of Jack Lee Fong and his son, Ron. They worked closely with SFFD and DBI to get the building rehabbed, including installing new custom-made doors after the Fire Department had to kick in the old ones. The small businesses were each invited to apply for a fire relief grant through the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, which we've been able to award in the amount of \$10,000 per business. They'll continue to need our help during their relocation period, so stay tuned for ongoing fundraising efforts!

The primary owner of the building that was the source of the fire (659 Union, AKA 1656 Powell Street), has also moved quickly to shore up the exterior façade of the gutted building, in order to preserve it for rehabilitation and future tenancy. This is a rent-controlled and historic building that we hope to have back online as quickly as possible, and will be working with the relevant city agencies to that effect.

I do want to acknowledge that North Beach has been through a lot lately: an uptick in storefront vacancies as a result of two fires, the long-standing issue of one particularly challenging landlord, and the harmful impacts of the "Amazon Effect". Thank you to the community members who have fought to preserve a balance of independent small businesses in our neighborhood planning process. The good news is that North Beach's vacancy rate is still significantly lower than most of the Neighborhood Commercial Districts in San Francisco, and a couple of beloved spots are set to re-open soon (see p. 8, "North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District: Why So Many Vacancies?!").

Finally, if you haven't had a chance to check out the North Beach Farmer's market, head over to Piazza Pellegrini every Saturday from 9am-1pm for locally-sourced produce and activities for the whole family. My office is also looking forward to the completion of the Broadway Streetscape Improvement Project and the Columbus Avenue Safety Project. Pedestrian and cyclist safety improvements continue to be part of the critical infrastructure that I have been fighting to secure funding for, with the knowledge that city agencies and subcontractors have got to step up their implementation on-time and on-budget.

A few other projects my office will be tracking in the days ahead: 1) pedestrian safety improvements around North Beach Library, 2) how to mitigate the long-standing irrigation issues at Washington Square in a way that minimizes disruption to the neighborhood and 3) securing Big Belly trash cans for the neighborhood in partnership with the North Beach Business Association. We appreciate your input and comments on all three of these endeavors!

### San Francisco Still The City That Can Stand Against the Storm

Whether you were happy or not with the election results of June 5th, San Franciscans proved once again



# NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATES FROM THE HEART OF NORTH BEACH



THD's June Mixer at Doors Open was a benefit for the businesses burned out of this building at Columbus/Union/Powell by the St. Patrick's Day fire.

PHOTO © DENNIS HEARNE

that we are still a progressive city ready to fight for our values and our future. In an election dominated by tens of millions of dollars of special interest investment from Big Tobacco, the Police Officers Association, and large real estate and tech titans, San Franciscans voted in close to record numbers largely for progressive policies (with a 50% voter surge as compared to California's overall low voter turnout). We're still the City that knows how to stand up to Big Money and campaign with heart.

Voters took the historic step to restructure how we deliver clean and affordable energy with Prop A, effectively cutting off PG&E's century-long monopoly over our City (it passed with some 77% of the vote). With the passage of Prop B, we eliminated the inherent conflict of interest of political candidates simultaneously serving as elite Commissioners, which passed by some 70% of the vote. I proposed both Propositions A and B, and was thrilled to see how well they both did. And just as in 2016 with the Realtors Association's Props P & U, San Francisco also saw through the poorly-written and cynical Prop D that posed as an "affordable housing" measure (it lost 55% to 45%) and ultimately passed a revenue measure to fund Universal Childcare with the passage of Prop C, another historic first for San Francisco to pilot for the nation.

We refuted the massive—over \$11 million dollars—spending by RJ Reynolds and Big Tobacco by passing Prop E, which upheld sensible local tobacco controls that were previously passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors. And with the passage of Prop F, San Francisco voters took the historic position in the midst of an eviction crisis that every resident grappling with a potential displacement from their home should have access to legal counsel and a fair shot at housing stability. Prop F will help ensure we take care of our neighbors and keep our communities intact, and has already been folded into the balanced city budget for the next fiscal year.

With the passage of Prop G, we all agreed to put our money where our collective mouth is regarding education, by supporting our public school teachers in one of the most expensive cities in the world (60% said yes to this \$298 per parcel tax). And finally, we put a decisive kibosh on the Police Officers Association's attempt to strip common-sense oversight of taser use by saying "NO" to Prop H.

And then came a series of Supreme Court decisions that ultimately struck at the very heart of our Democracy and shook us to the core. Our own City Attorney has committed to defending San Francisco's policy that fake health clinics cannot mislead women about their health care options in the face of a recent SCOTUS decision that the public disclosures required under California's



Art & Culture Chair Anna Berryman and Social Chair Bob Berryman masterminded THD's Summer Social benefit party.

PARTY PHOTOS © MARY ANN SCANLAN

FACT Act are a violation of the First Amendment. With Justice Kennedy's recent announcement that he will resign, the future of *Roe v. Wade* hangs in the balance. SCOTUS's decisions to uphold Trump's racist and xenophobic Muslim travel ban and gut our public sector unions in the JANUS case have reminded us all of how quickly our hard-fought rights can be stripped.

It's a dark time, to be sure.

But we are facing it together as a country and a local community here in San Francisco. Continue to march and show up with your families, continue to put pressure on Democrats and Republicans alike to fight for the basic tenets of our Constitution, and continue to donate to organizations like RAICES (<https://www.raicestexas.org/coll-page-section/donate/>). And connect with members of your neighborhood who might be feeling overwhelmed, confused and heartbroken. Don't let them despair — organize together.

And as we approach November, I encourage us all to think about how we can build on the momentum of small victories, cultivate new young leaders who come from and are invested in our communities and craft policies together to create a more equitable San Francisco and country. ✕



# THE SEARCH FOR BEAT BLVD & THE GHOSTS OF THE NORTH BEACH BEATS

by Richard Slota

"Fri., two cops stalked into the Bagel Shop on Grant Avenue and announced to the assembled Beatniks: 'Awright, we're gonna vag (charge with vagrancy) anybody who can't prove employment.' This was greeted with such a roar of laughter that the cops wavered, fell back, broke ranks, fled in vagrant confusion. Having sniffed along Beat Blvd. recently . . . I think fragrancy might be a more reasonable charge." —Herb Caen column from May 13, 1958

Hey, hep cats, I've been speeding like a melting glacier through my play about the Beats in North Beach, dig? What a trip.

I am amazed how, in my lifetime, North Beach has been the center of an international literary and cultural revolution (I was 11 in 1958), yet far enough in the past to be just beyond my fingertips. I keep running into people in the neighborhood who'll say something like, "Oh yeah, I hung out back then. I was like 15, but I knew so-and-so . . ."

If you look closely, the ghosts of the North Beach Beats hide everywhere. The neighborhood is packed with Beat landmarks, though they lack identifying plaques or signs. One good starting point for a search comes from City Lights Books: *The Beat Generation in San Francisco: A Literary Guidebook*, written by Bill Morgan and edited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Along with photos by Allen Ginsberg, the book offers street maps, addresses, 13 walking tours, great background info, and delicious, sometimes salacious, details. Another good starting point is The Beat Museum at 540 Broadway (see Romalyn Schmaltz's "The Beat Goes Onward" in the last Semaphore). I picked up on an unmistakable and powerful Beat vibe and got an excellent overview there.

It's called The Beat Museum, by the way, because the term *Beat* won out over the various other labels floating around North Beach in the mid-20th-century. "The San Francisco Renaissance" started here in the late 1940's, with poets such as Kenneth Rexroth, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Duncan, and Jack Spicer. They were a generation older than the so-called Beat poets, including Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, who met in New York City before moving to San Francisco. The San Francisco Renaissance poets were used to defining the terms and calling the shots, and they did not approve of a name change. They resisted losing control of their own narrative, which is completely understand-

able. But as a copyright infringement judge recently noted, "Nobody owns history."

Maybe the name *Beat* won out for a simpler reason: one syllable is catchier than eight syllables. Also, Beat has echoes of "bohemian" and echoes the "Beach" in North Beach. The North Beach Beats. Cool. Hip.

In the late 1950's, quite suddenly, the Beat scene in North Beach exploded from being a local curiosity to an international phenomenon. The scene burned with fierce intensity, but just as suddenly extinguished under the weight of intense media focus and invading tourists. Every Beat hangout closed by 1960 (see sidebar) except for Gino & Carlo's. (Caffè Trieste, which opened in 1956, catered to the Italians. Not until decades later, by default, did it become a Beat "survivor" hangout.)

Beneath the lingo, the dress, and the disdain for conformity, the Beats believed in capitalism and individualism. They didn't believe in the intellect (a possibly fatal problem), and they avoided politics and collective action. For example, the Beats mounted no group protest when Bob Kaufman was arrested dozens of times by the SFPD. He was arrested for seemingly spontaneous oral poems in bars, on street corners, and from the roofs of automobiles, and for being black in North Beach, and for being married to a white woman. Certain members of the SFPD—particularly the so-called Beatnik Patrol—saw their job as enforcing conventional community mores. Some police officers, as well as local residents, wanted blacks to stay put in the Fillmore, and North Beach not to be overrun by these raucous strangers. The vagrancy laws allowed the police tremendous discretion to arrest anyone for anything. So, how did the Beats respond? Every drinking establishment on upper Grant Avenue had a jar on the bar to collect bail money for Kaufman.

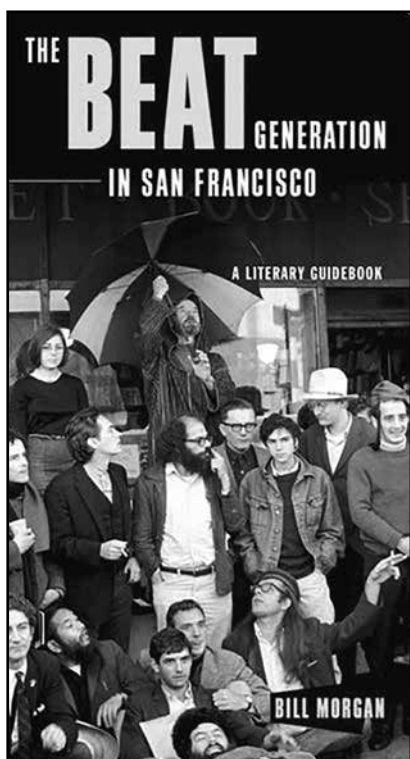
Allen Ginsberg remains the most famous of the Beat poets, largely, in my judgment, because he managed his poetry as a career in a very businesslike way. Ginsberg systematically and effectively marketed his poetry and viewpoints, edited major Beat anthologies, founded Naropa University, and intervened to get his friends published. It's been said that the most important thing in poetry is the sales pitch and who you hang out with; the least important thing is the work itself. In the 1950's the half-joking definition of a Beat was Allen Ginsberg and his friends.

In contrast to Ginsberg, Bob Kaufman didn't approach his poetry as a career. That may be why he remains one of the least famous of the major Beats. In hindsight, his frequent arrests would have been a bold career move, if he had publicized them in a manner parallel to Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti's publicizing of "Howl" (i.e., the *Howl* obscenity trial). But that wasn't Kaufman's bag. He saw his arrests and his poetry as an expression of his personal revolution as a black man. In many ways, he saw himself, and others saw him, as a Christ-figure sacrificing himself for the greater good. Or perhaps he was just a self-indulgent prankster and drunk who kept shooting himself in the foot. Madness and creativity are, at times, twins. Being a poet was his



City Lights Bookstore: still a vibrant literary hub for artists, activists, readers, and tourists.

PHOTO BY RICHARD SLOTA



*The Beat Generation in San Francisco*. Book and cover design by Stefan Gutermuth, cover photo by Larry Keenan



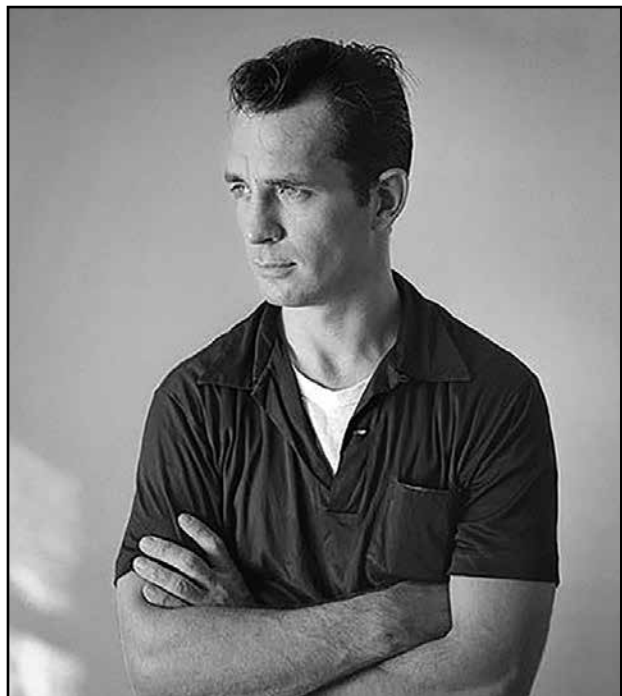
Poets Allen Ginsberg and longtime partner Peter Orlovsky.

PHOTO BY HERBERT RUSCHE

way of trying to start a revolution. If he had cared about marketing, he could have been a literary star.

Kerouac's lover Joyce Johnson, in her Beat-era memoir *Minor Characters*, cites an Allen Ginsberg journal entry from 1954: "The social organization which is most true of itself to the artist is the boy gang, not society's perfum'd marriage." The male Beats were blind to their own misogyny. The short list of women Beat poets was no accident. To the Beats' credit, they were pioneers in accepting people of any and all sexual orientations and preferences, and in advocating for pot, free love, and free speech. That was all gone and groovy—they won, eventually, most things they seemed to want—but they left unfinished business that would be shouldered by the hippies in the following decades.

Jack Kerouac is often credited with coining the term "The Beat Generation" in 1948. He wasn't referring to



Jack Kerouac, around 1956.

PHOTO BY TOM PALUNBO



A line of Kerouac's in the middle of what is now Jack Kerouac alley alongside City Lights Bookstore.

PHOTO BY CJ VERBURG

## 1950S HANGOUTS OF THE NORTH BEACH BEAT POETS

**The Place**, 1546 Grant. Today it is Blossoms Tailoring and Alterations.

**The Co-existence Bagel Shop**, 1398 Grant. Today it is Henry's Hunan North.

**The Coffee Gallery** at 1353 Grant. Today it is Maggie McGarry's.

**Gino and Carlo's**, 548 Green. It remains the only historic Beat hangout in North Beach still in business (not counting Vesuvio).

**The Cellar**, 576 Green. It was in the basement beneath what is now Caffè Sport. The Cellar mixed jazz with poets like Ferlinghetti and Rexroth.



a movement, though, but to the Cold War generation beat down by the war and the Bomb. Alternatively, Ginsberg credited Kerouac, in 1959, for deriving “Beat” from “beatitude.” Bob Kaufman also claimed that “Beat” was short for beatitude, but in the context of his poetry journal *Beatitude*, first published in 1959 at the Bread and Wine Mission, just off Grant, at 501 Greenwich. In its first issue, *Beatitude* declared itself “a weekly miscellany of poetry and other jazz designed to extol beauty and promote the beatific life among the various mendicants, neo-existentialists, Christs, poets, painters, musicians and other inhabitants and observers of North Beach, San Francisco, United States of America.” Arguments about who named the movement, when, and what the term means, will likely never be settled.

Ginsberg wrote much of “Howl” at 1010 Montgomery. It was a perfect poem for that moment in history (the first two pages, anyway), and it gave Ginsberg tremendous literary power. Some have accused him of using that power to become the spokesman for the movement and to cut out everyone in the movement who wasn’t in his inner circle. Certainly Ginsberg’s taste, more than a sense of community, dictated which poets he included in the anthologies he edited, and how much of their work. By contrast, Kaufman, the outsider and revolutionary, ended up shuffling around Grant Avenue, 86’d out of all the bars, and strung out on meth.

Months after the Russians made headlines by launching Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, Herb Caen originated the dismissive and snide term “Beatnik” (April 3, 1958), which all Beats detested. (How is a Beatnik like a Sputnik? They are both far out.) The mainstream media of the day did great damage to Beats, using the term Beatnik to mock them in endless ways (Maynard G. Krebs, anyone?). Caen referred to Upper Grant Avenue as Beat Blvd. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it “. . . an open-air come-and-go mental hospital 3 blocks long.” In 1958, tour buses started running up Grant. The scandalous lifestyle of the Beats was much more fascinating to the public than Beat literature and art. Tourists hung out the windows and gawked as if the



Poets Jack Hirschman (L) and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (R) with librarian and friend Robert Carlson (C).  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT CARLSON.



The Allen Ginsberg Library at Naropa University, Boulder, CO.  
PHOTO BY KRIS COHEN

Beats were animals in a zoo. The bars on Upper Grant increasingly had more squares and weekend-wannabe’s than the real deal. The Beats also mocked themselves; Michael McClure called North Beach *Beatniklandia*. Man, the scene was starting to get old.

Four major Beat-era poets are still living: Diane Di Prima, 83, Michael McClure, 85, Gary Snyder, 87, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 99. Ferlinghetti was linked to the Beats, but he was no fan of either the name or the Beat poets, although he published many of them—

## FERLINGHETTI FIRSTS

He participated in the Normandy invasion as a commander of a submarine chaser.

He visited the ruins of Nagasaki six weeks after the atom bomb fell. The experience made him a lifelong pacifist.

He married Selden Kirby-Smith in 1951. They have a daughter, Julie, and a son, Lorenzo.

He founded City Lights Bookstore with Peter D. Martin in 1953—the nation’s first all-paperback bookstore.

The first book he published under his City Lights Books imprint was his first book of poems: *Pictures of the Gone World*.

The fourth book he published was *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg.

His 1958 book of poems, *A Coney Island of the Mind*, *A Circus of the Soul*, has sold over a million copies.

He published Allen Ginsberg, Bob Kaufman, Kenneth Rexroth, Kenneth Patchen, Robert Duncan, Gregory Corso, William Burroughs, Diane di Prima, Michael McClure, Philip Lamantia, and Gary Snyder.

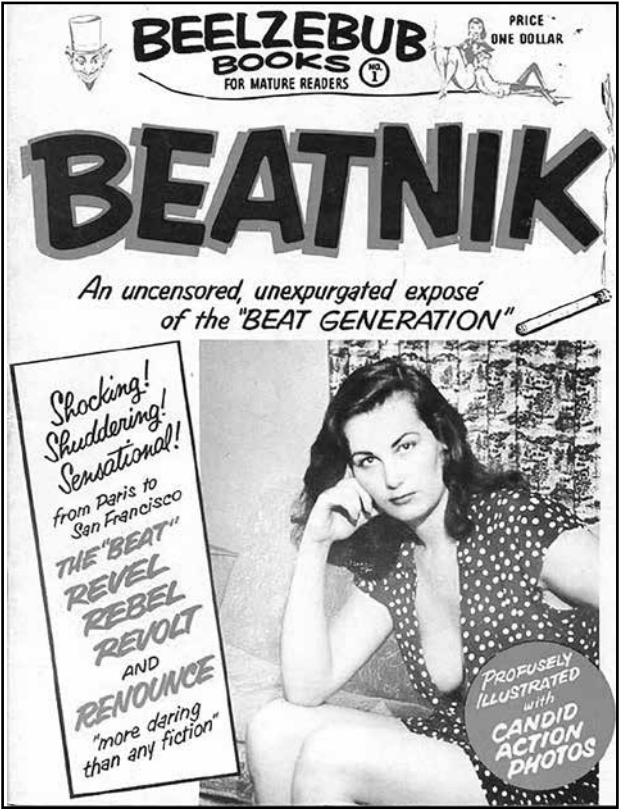
He is the ranking poet in North Beach and indeed the USA. In addition, he is the best-selling living poet in the USA.

On March 24, 2019, he will turn 100.

most prominently and profitably, Allen Ginsberg and *Howl*. He literally had no time for the Beat lifestyle. Ferlinghetti was married with two kids and a business to run. His kids could always count on him walking through the front door, home from work, between 5:30 and 6:00.

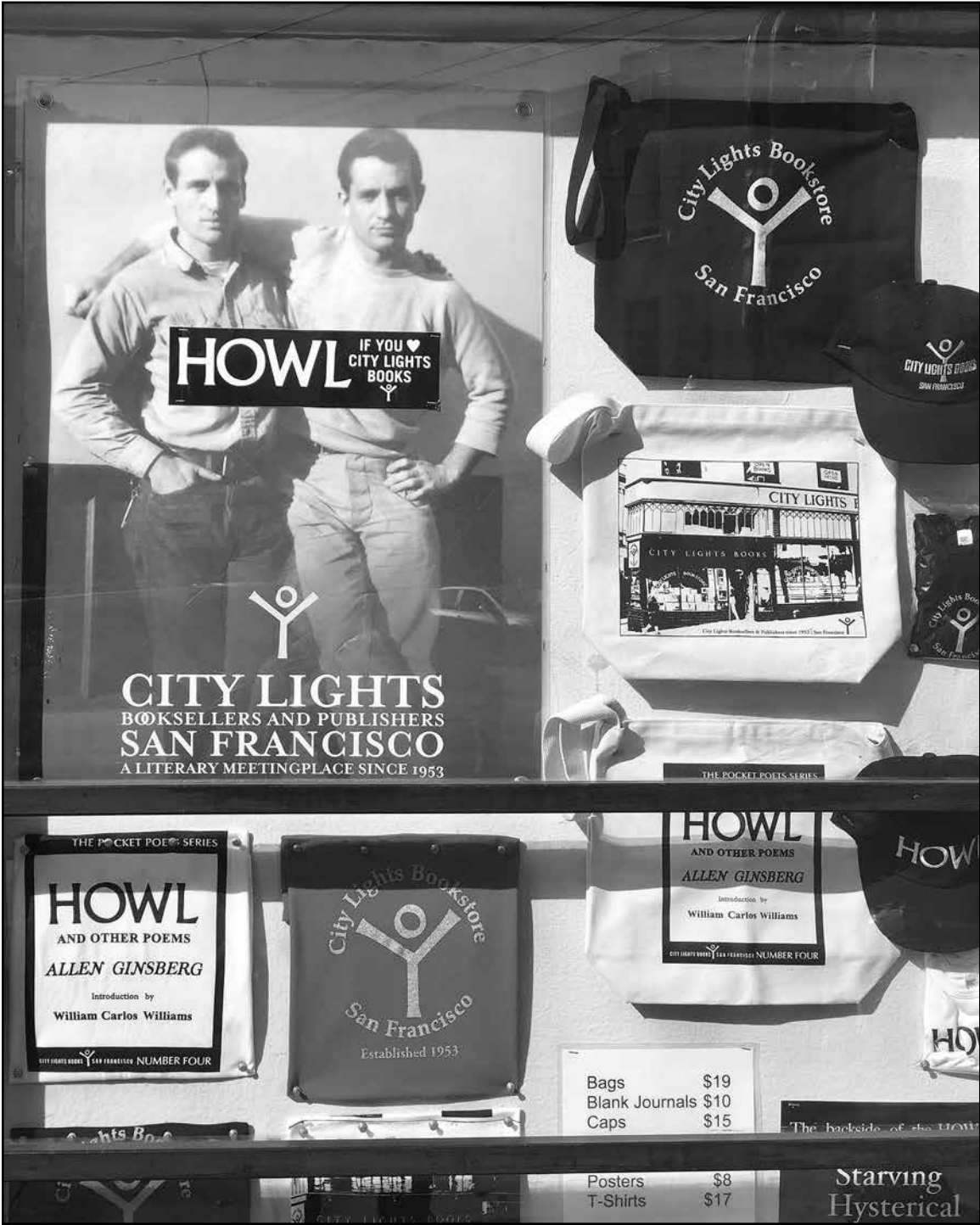
Now, whenever I walk the streets of North Beach, most particularly Grant Avenue, I see and hear ghosts. I feel their presences.

. . . Later, baby.



## THE YEAR “MAJOR” BEAT POETS DIED

- Jack Spicer, 1965
- Jack Kerouac, 1969
- Kenneth Rexroth, 1982
- Richard Brautigan, 1984
- Bob Kaufman, 1986
- Robert Duncan, 1988
- Allen Ginsberg, 1997
- Gregory Corso, 2001
- Phillip Whalen, 2002
- Phil Lamantia, 2005
- Joanne Kyger, 2017



Memories and souvenirs in City Lights’ window.

PHOTO BY RICHARD SLOTA



## PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Stan Hayes, Committee Co-Chair  
stan.hayes@thd.org

Hello again! Welcome to our Summer Planning & Zoning report. Great time of the year: summer, solstice, longest day. Vacations, trips, barbecues. The onset of San Francisco's real winter. You'd think we could take time off from Planning & Zoning, too. But, as always, we continue to be busy.

The Planning & Zoning Committee met in April at the North Beach Library. (Note that any THD member is invited to these meetings – get on our mailing list by letting us know of your interest at [hello@thd.org](mailto:hello@thd.org).)

First, we heard a presentation by architect Ian Birchall of Ian Birchall & Associates about a proposed project at 425 Broadway, an L-shaped lot on the south side of Broadway through to Montgomery. The new owner is seeking to construct a large building (6 floors above Broadway, 8 floors overall) that would contain 36 residential units, office and retail space, and a garage. Then, we heard a presentation by Suheil Shatara of Shatara Architecture about a proposed remodel and addition of a floor to a historic building at 120-124 Varennes. Finally, we heard a presentation by project sponsor Kieran Buckley about a proposed project at 535 Green, currently a parking lot on the south side of Green, in which a new approximately 20-unit condominium building would be built, with potential alterations to the on-site historic Buon Gusto Building (once the largest sausage and salami producing factory in the West). After discussion, the consensus of the Committee was as follows:

• **425 Broadway.** *The Committee concluded that the building, as proposed, would be too tall and massive for its location.* As a result, it would be out of scale with adjacent and other buildings along the south side of Broadway, and thus contrary to findings required for approval by the San Francisco Planning Code. The Committee also noted that, because it's in an area recognized by the City as "historically significant," the project would have to be modified to be compatible with existing historic resources.

• **120-124 Varennes.** *The Committee concluded that the historic building's contributory status warrants protection against changes that would alter its historic status,* including the proposed fourth floor addition and other substantive alterations. The Committee was concerned that the extent of the proposed remodeling is so substantial that it would result in a de facto demolition of the building, which is contributory to the Upper Grant Historic District. The Committee also was concerned about the process by which permits were obtained for this project, beginning with the Planning Department's incorrect approval of an "over-the-counter" permit followed by series of incremental permitting actions, or a serial permitting, that could have the effect of masking the cumulative impacts of the proposed project on this historic resource, and circumventing environmental and public review.

• **535 Green.** *The Committee concluded that new construction on the parking lot site should incorporate several important design considerations,* including compatibility with the scale, massing, and design of the historic resources in the North Beach and the Upper Grant Avenue Historic District, consistency with the nearly uniform size, style, and design of the buildings along the immediate block of Green from Columbus to Grant, and preservation of the light and air of residents

in the adjacent densely occupied residential hotel to the east. In addition, the Committee strongly stated THD's opposition to any significant changes or modifications to the on-site historic Buon Gusto Building.

We're also tracking and weighing in on other wide-ranging planning topics, including the Mayor's Process "Improvement" Ordinance. We strongly believe that short-circuiting public input is false efficiency – that public input is essential to creating better planning decisions, especially in a city as diverse as San Francisco. That's why we especially opposed the ordinance's proposed shortening of the notice time for the public to respond, from 30 to 20 days (e.g., for demolitions, alterations, new construction, and removal of housing units), and reduction in the public's access to information by limiting the type and style of mailing to a single notice sheet, instead of a packet containing full project information. Thanks to Supervisor Peskin, and in response to THD's and other comments, the Board of Supervisors has amended the ordinance to ensure that notification will not be reduced from 30 to 20 days, notification will not be reduced to a post card, and "pop outs" will not be permitted without notification.

We're also tracking and commenting on amendments that would relax Auxiliary Dwelling Unit (ADU) requirements, including our opposition to amendments that would allow ADUs in new construction. We're engaged as well in the ongoing rewrite of Planning Code demolition provisions that would (finally) rein in the current explosive upsizing of small homes into massive mega-residences. And, etc., etc., etc. Phew!

Remember! This is just a sampling. YOU CAN BE A PART OF THIS! If you'd like to join, or at least get information from, the THD Planning & Zoning Committee, just send me an email at [hello@thd.org](mailto:hello@thd.org) or [Stan.Hayes@thd.org](mailto:Stan.Hayes@thd.org) to get onto our email list. ✂



## WATERFRONT REPORT

by Jon Golinger, Committee Chair  
jon.golinger@thd.org

### Remembering a Waterfront Warrior

In May we lost a true waterfront warrior when Lee Radner passed away.

For 15 years, Lee led the Friends of Golden Gateway (FOGG), a passionately active organization of swimmers, families, and Embarcadero neighbors. Under his leadership, FOGG fought doggedly to preserve neighborhood recreation along the waterfront that was repeatedly threatened with demolition by grandiose development schemes over the years.

It was during the most recent and high-profile of those battles – the epic 8 Washington saga – that I got to know and work closely with Lee. Through the many twists and turns of our ultimately successful campaign to defeat an attempt to upzone the waterfront for high-rise luxury condos along the Embarcadero, Lee was engaged every step of the way. Long before and long after most of us were at work in the trenches on the 8 Washington fight, he was there. Throughout the 8 Washington battle, Lee inspired me, taught me, and contributed enormously more for our neighborhood and city than most of us will ever really know.

Even after Lee lost his wife Rogene – they were married for 69 years – he remained engaged in a waterfront leadership role because he knew people were counting on him. I was so happy to see Lee keep on going (and swimming nearly every day) as long as he possibly could. I was fortunate to get a chance to sit down with Lee not long ago to talk about the future of our waterfront. From that I remember this: he laughed, he was forward-looking, and he said we need to keep on fighting for what we believe and what we love. In the spirit of Lee Radner, we will fight on for the future of San Francisco's spectacular waterfront.

## SEA CHANGES

### The Port Commission Floats On

As I have reported previously in this column, the San Francisco Port Commission is long overdue for a major overhaul. In 2014, the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury released a scathing report that called for a complete revamp of the Port Commission to make it less a political tool and more a truly independent steward of our precious public waterfront. It is long past time for the Commission to benefit from a diversity of environmental, maritime, and neighborhood voices, in addition to members with real estate, development, and business expertise. The first of the Civil Grand Jury's recommendations was to pass an amendment to the City Charter to balance the appointments to the Port Commission between the Board of Supervisors and Mayor. Currently the Mayor appoints every Port Commissioner.

Exhibit A of the need for changes to the Port Commission occurred this April. While the public's attention was focused on the dramatic special election for mayor, temporary Mayor Mark Farrell quietly used his authority to fill four out of the five seats on the Port Commission. Farrell reappointed Commissioners Willie Adams and Doreen Woo Ho for four more years and appointed two new members: Gail Gilman and Victor Makras. Gail Gilman has been chief executive officer at the Community Housing Partnership since 2010 and has extensive experience related to housing and homelessness. Victor Makras is a real estate broker who has previously served on a number of city boards and commissions. Gilman replaces former Commissioner Leslie Katz, whose term expired and whom Farrell chose not to reappoint. Makras replaces former Commissioner Eleni Kounalakis, who resigned after a brief tenure to run for the office of Lieutenant Governor.

The fifth member of the Port Commission is Kimberly Brandon, who currently serves as the Commission's president. She was first appointed to the Port Commission by former Mayor Willie Brown in 1997 – more than 20 years ago.

### Port Issues Call For Public-Oriented Waterfront Projects

This summer, the Port is issuing a formal "Request for Interest" from organizations, developers, non-profits, and businesses in an effort to promote a broad array of public-oriented uses on a dozen vacant piers throughout the Embarcadero Historic District.

The "Request for Interest" seeks to cast a wide net for proposed projects with public-oriented uses, defined as any or all of the following: recreational enterprises, arts and educational programs, museums, entertainment, experiential retail, and specialty food and beverage uses.

The request seeks proposals for public-oriented uses on any of the following piers:

- Northeast waterfront: Pier 35, Pier 33, Pier 31, Pier 29 ½, Pier 29, Pier 23, Pier 19 ½, Pier 19
- Central waterfront: Agriculture Building, Pier 26, Pier 28, Pier 38, Pier 40, Pier 48

If you have questions or want information about how to submit a response to the request, contact Rebecca Benassini at the Port at (415) 274-0548 or email [rebecca.benassini@sfpport.com](mailto:rebecca.benassini@sfpport.com) ✂



Lee Radner (R) leading a group collecting petitions on the referendum to stop 8 Washington.



# NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

by Nancy Shanahan, Historian  
nancy.shanahan@thd.org

Our beloved North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District (NBNCD), designated by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors some 35 years ago, has been a cutting-edge example of how local neighborhood zoning controls should work. Many neighborhoods continue to seek, and sometimes obtain, the sensible zoning we have that makes North Beach so diverse and unique. But recently, the NBNCD has experienced the perfect storm with a glut of commercial ground-floor vacancies. We're all concerned and are working together with our brother and sister business and neighborhood organizations to identify changes that can help us maintain the old-world, chain-free, funky North Beach we all love, and that continues to be a cultural and economic powerhouse.

## History of Vacancy Trends

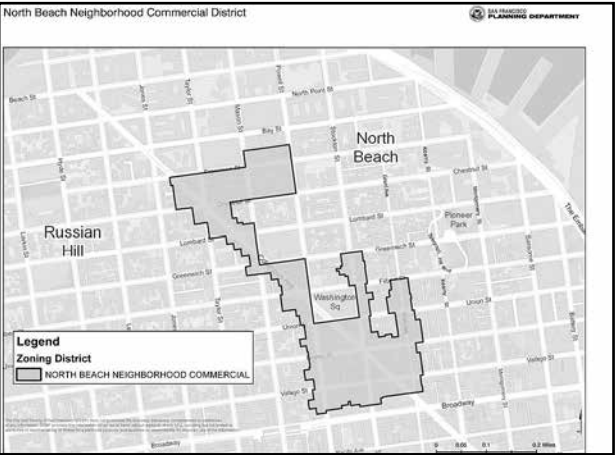
To document the NBNCD's business mix and vacancy trends, Telegraph Hill Dwellers conducted objective surveys of the district's retail spaces in 1986, 1999, 2007, and 2015. Those surveys have been the basis for legislative initiatives to protect small businesses and the retail character of North Beach, including banning "formula retail" (chain stores) and halting the loss of ground-floor neighborhood-serving stores to banks and offices, while balancing neighborhood-serving businesses such as hardware and grocery stores, on one hand, and bars and restaurants on the other. The statistics from these studies are instructive and often counter the narrative of the day. For instance, after the closure and ultimate destruction of the Embarcadero Freeway (remember that monstrosity that cut us all off from our beautiful waterfront?), the number of vacant storefronts actually declined from 45 in 1986, the year the NBNCD controls were first put in place, to a mere 15 vacancies in 2015.

Despite the good news from 1986 to 2015, our eyes are not lying to us. The NBNCD has recently seen a dramatic increase in the number of vacant commercial spaces. What has caused this increase, and how can our treasured commercial district recover?

To begin to address these questions, we just completed our most recent NBNCD vacancy survey — the fifth in 32 years — conducted jointly by THD, the North Beach Business Association, and the North Beach Neighbors. Here's what we've learned.



This 500 block of Columbus Ave. has 5 vacancies, 4 of them in one building. PHOTO © DENNIS HEARNE



The NBNCD boundaries encompass most of the commercial establishments north of Broadway (which is in its own district), including those on Columbus and Grant avenues and Powell, Green, Union, Vallejo and Stockton streets.

COURTESY OF SF PLANNING DEPT.



The retrofitting of this large residential building in the 1400 block of Grant has temporarily displaced businesses such as 101 Music on the ground floor, but is an essential step to preserve the existing housing in our neighborhood. PHOTO © DENNIS HEARNE

## What the Current Vacancy Survey Reveals

There are now 38 vacancies in the NBNCD out of a total 380 individual commercial spaces. (This vacancy number does not include the 5 commercial spaces affected by the St. Patrick's Day fire in the 600 block of Union Street.) That's a vacancy rate of 10% — more than double the rate in 2015. While this is not good, we have observed that other neighborhood commercial districts, such as the Union Street NCD in Cow Hollow, have even higher vacancy rates and turnover.

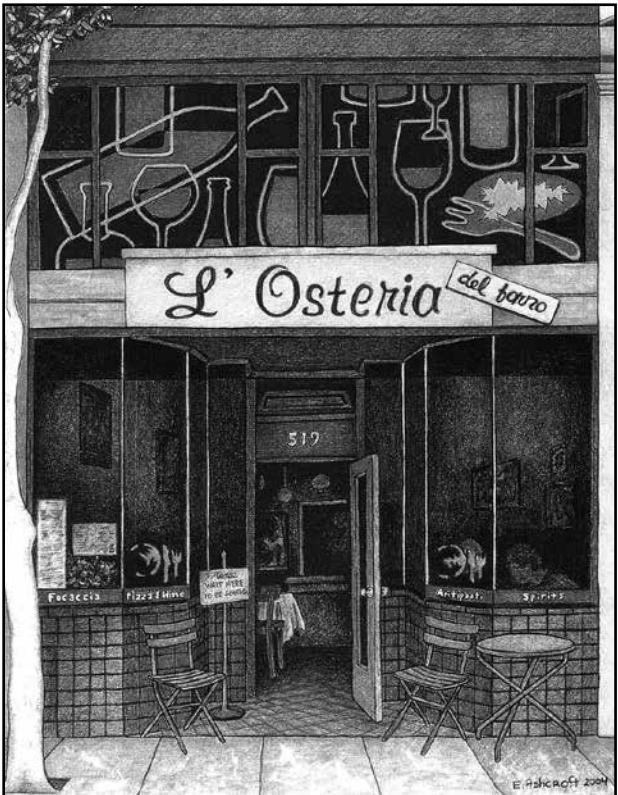
A closer examination of the current vacancies reveals that the NBNCD has recently experienced a confluence of events and circumstances that have displaced existing businesses, including fires, mandatory seismic retrofits, difficult landlords, and changing economic behavior (commonly referred to as the "Amazon Effect"). As you will see, the reasons for the current high vacancy rate are both varied and cumulative.

## Vacancies Due to Seismic Retrofits

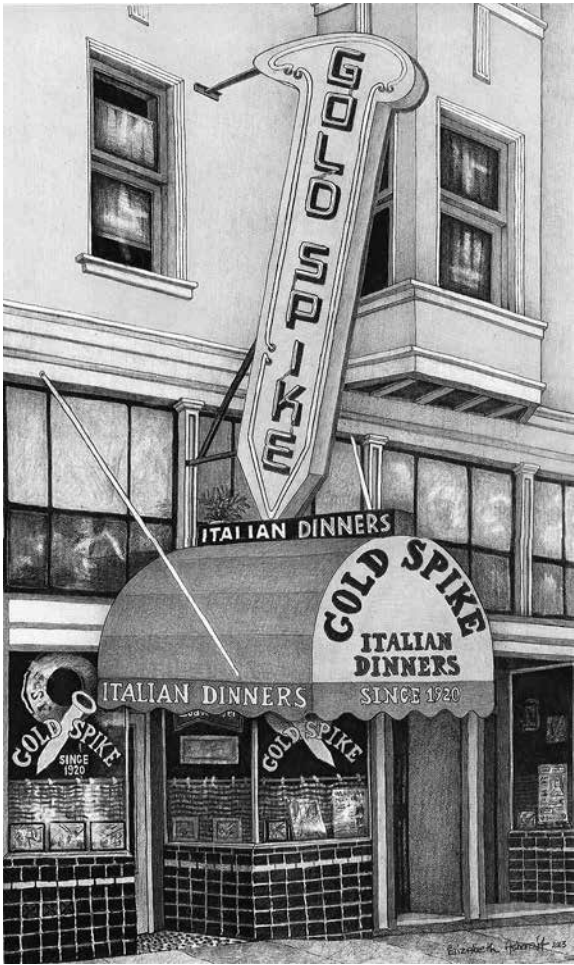
Eight of these vacancies (21%) are the result of citywide seismic retrofit mandates where commercial tenants have been temporarily or permanently displaced. Although it is important to seismically upgrade our soft story buildings (those whose lower floors lack the structural support to prevent collapse during an earthquake), many small businesses cannot financially survive even a temporary closure or displacement. Although "For Lease" signs are found on some of these retrofits, commercial real estate agents in our neighborhood are having difficulty finding prospective tenants when the completion date of the retrofit is unknown.

Five vacancies due to retrofit displacement are in a single building on the west side of the 500 block of Columbus between Green and Union. Four are behind the plywood wall (515, 519, 521 and 527 Columbus), including the popular *L'Osteria del Forno* site at 519 Columbus. Another vacant storefront in this building, the former *Caffe Spuntino* at 543 Columbus, has also been permitted for seismic retrofit. Remarkably, the construction that years ago forced the *U.S. Restaurant* out of its [second] location at 515 Columbus is still unfinished. The *Gold Spike* was displaced from the same building in 2006. According to Supervisor Peskin and former commercial tenants in this building, the landlord, Ms. Helen Tam, has been remarkably difficult to work with and continues to make unrealistic demands of her commercial tenants, tipping the scale toward closure.

Three spaces on the east side of the 1400 block of Grant between Green and Union have also been vacated due to major seismic retrofit work. Fortunately, two of these businesses have moved into other spaces on Grant: 101 Music has temporarily moved two doors up Grant, and SOUL has relocated into the former *Aria Antiques* space at 1522 Grant. Additional retrofit



The former *L'Osteria del Forno* in the 500 block of Columbus Ave. DRAWING © ELIZABETH ASHCROFT



The former *Gold Spike* in the 500 block of Columbus Ave. DRAWING © ELIZABETH ASHCROFT

# COMMERCIAL DISTRICT: WHY SO MANY VACANCIES?!



Stepping back from the boarded-up section of the 500 block of Columbus shows how literally many of our neighborhood businesses and residences are connected. PHOTO © DENNIS HEARNE

work continues in *Henry's Hunan* at 1350 Grant and the adjacent vacant space at 1356 Grant.

## Long-Term Vacancies

Long-term empty storefronts negatively impact the business corridor. Our recent survey found that nine of the currently vacant storefronts (25%) have been vacant for at least three years. Five of these are in buildings owned by one of two multi-property owners.

Why storefronts stay empty for years defies economic logic and is a mystery. While other commercial spaces in North Beach have turned over quickly to new tenants, certain storefronts remain vacant year after year — either not for lease, or listed at rents that are unrealistic.

Several other spaces that appear vacant have actually been adapted for uses not allowed under the Planning Code. For instance, some restaurants are using adjacent storefronts for storage, food preparation, trash receptacles, or even expansion of their seating area by opening up the walls between the spaces.

## Vacancies Due to Fire

Tragically, the NBNCD has experienced two dev-

astating fires in less than a year. Caffè Puccini, one of our great neighborhood anchors, is permanently gone, with a “For Lease” sign in the window. The St. Patrick’s Day fire burned out five of our local businesses on Union Street: Coit Liquor, Rogue Ale House, Tuk Tuk Thai, Ferry Plaza Seafood, and Salzburg. We are all thankful that no one was hurt in either fire, and THD and other neighbors are monitoring and pushing to get the Union Street businesses re-opened. Realistically, it’s going to take a while.

## Elephant in the Room

The elephant in the room is the loss of retail revenue throughout the City due to online shopping (commonly referred to as the “Amazon Effect”). This change in economic behavior is being felt not only in North Beach, but in every commercial district in San Francisco.

## Good News

We’re pleased to report that the two largest vacant storefronts on Columbus Avenue have new tenants.

The team behind *Vicoletto* (550 Green St.), Francesco Covucci and Peter Fazio, have leased the large restaurant space vacated by Panta Rei (431 Columbus

Ave., the original location of the U.S. Restaurant). At the corner of Columbus and Stockton, construction is underway for *Barbara Pinseria & Cocktail Bar*, a new restaurant that will serve a thin-crust Roman-style pizza known as “pinsa” after the pizza dough they will be using — a mix of semolina, rice flour, and wheat flour. In related news, *Vicoletto* has been converted into *Pasta Pop-Up*, which will be permanent, despite the name.

The closure last year of *Rose Pistola* (532 Columbus Ave.), the Ligurian restaurant that had been a fixture of North Beach for 21 years, took us all by surprise. We have news that the vacant space has been taken over by owners Bonnie Fisher and Boris Dramov, principals of *Roma Design Group*, who have named their new restaurant venture *Cantina Di Liguria*. According to Ms. Fisher, their goal is to create something that builds on the legacy of the neighborhood, while contributing something unique and new. We wish them luck and look forward to dining there.

## What We Can Do

The North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District has faced a variety of tests over its first three and a half decades. Noting the current drastic rise in vacancies, THD is collaboratively and actively developing recommendations to curb the loss of businesses and fill storefronts with neighborhood-serving businesses. We look forward to and encourage a robust conversation with those in the neighborhood and in City Hall to ensure that North Beach retains its historical character while opening its doors to businesses that enrich the community.

North Beach has always been a desirable place to open a business. It is an incubator: some enterprises that first opened here have thrived enough to grow beyond their original locations. New small businesses looking to establish a brick-and-mortar presence can be encouraged to fill our storefronts if we can do more to enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience. No business will open on a street that does not feel safe, or is dirty. We thank the North Beach Business Association for hanging the lovely flower baskets. But more improvements are needed, including planting new trees to replace the removed Ficus trees, regular steam cleaning of our sidewalks, and better garbage collection receptacles. Bars and restaurants could do a better job of cleaning up the sidewalks and streets in front of their establishments. And local residents should make every effort to shop locally, to support and retain the wonderful businesses we have.

Please take a moment and weigh in by emailing your comments to [hello@thd.org](mailto:hello@thd.org), with “NBNCD” in the subject line.



These storefronts in the 1400 block of Grant have been vacated for seismic retrofit. PHOTO © DENNIS HEARNE



101 Music has moved two doors up Grant during retrofitting; they plan to return when it’s done. PHOTO © KAREN ZISSON



# SEMAPHORE BULLETIN BOARD

## SWITZERLAND ON THE EMBARCADERO

Look north from the Exploratorium and you'll see swissnex across the water at the end of Pier 17. Formerly on Montgomery Street, swissnex San Francisco is our neighborhood's hub in a global network for international collaboration. Run by the Swiss Consulate and open to the public, its purpose is to connect people and ideas from Switzerland and North America, with special emphasis on technology, science, and the arts.

From May 17-July 28, swissnex's featured exhibit was "Mental Work: Brain-Machine Interfaces: Towards a New Era of Human-Machine Interaction" (see p. 3). Other events have featured galaxy identification, game theory, climate change, start-up workshops, and much more. If you're curious about cutting-edge innovation, go to <https://www.swissnexsanfrancisco.org/> or stop by Suite 800 on Pier 17.



## NORTH BEACH FIRST FRIDAYS

Stroll around Columbus and Grant avenues on the first Friday evening of each month to see what's new in the neighborhood. You'll find an open-house welcome at art galleries, boutiques, and local watering holes, as well as pop-ups and cultural events.

Canessa Gallery, 708 Montgomery St. at Columbus [www.canessa.org](http://www.canessa.org)  
Gallery 1317, 1317 Grant Ave.  
Grey City Gallery, 250 Columbus Ave. at Broadway/Pacific/Saroyan Alley [greycitygallery.com](http://greycitygallery.com)  
Live Worms Gallery, 1345 Grant Ave. [www.sflivewormsgallery.com](http://www.sflivewormsgallery.com)  
Macchiarini Creative Design, 1544 Grant Ave. [www.maccreativedesign.com](http://www.maccreativedesign.com)  
Modern Eden Gallery, 801 Greenwich St. [www.moderneden.com](http://www.moderneden.com)  
Mule Gallery, 80 Fresno St. [mulegallery.com](http://mulegallery.com)  
North Beach Bauhaus, 703 Columbus Ave. [www.nbbauhaus.com](http://www.nbbauhaus.com)  
Telegraph Hill Gallery, 491 Greenwich St. [telegraphhillgallery.com](http://telegraphhillgallery.com)

Remind yourself how much fun it is to live in such a vibrant corner of the world by rediscovering the thriving local art scene while you support the creative community behind it.

Events vary from month to month, so check the *North Beach First Fridays* website (<http://northbeachfirstfridays.com/>), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/northbeachfirstfridays/>), and Twitter feed (<https://twitter.com/NB1stFridays>) for the latest openings, closings, and events.



## YERBA BUENA GARDENS FESTIVAL

Summer means a rich lineup of free outdoor performances at Yerba Buena Gardens, just minutes from North Beach at Mission between Third and Fourth streets.

Saturday, August 4 is the kickoff concert for the 24th annual AfroSolo Arts Festival, 1-3 PM. Don't miss this tribute to Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday featuring David Hardiman and the 19 piece San Francisco All Stars Big Band, with guest vocalists Denise Perrier and Nina Causey.

<https://ybgfestival.org/event/afrosolo-2018/>  
Full calendar of the Festival's performances at <https://ybgfestival.org/>



## FREE STREET TREES IN AUGUST!

Remember when we said you could get a free street tree? Friends of the Urban Forest volunteers will be in the neighborhood on August 25th to plant new trees in many of those empty tree wells. Contact Jeff Cheney, Chair of the Russian Hill Tree Planting Initiative, for more info and to help out: [jeff@cheneydd.com](mailto:jeff@cheneydd.com) (415) 378-2876



## FREE JOB SEARCH MEETINGS

that can jumpstart your job search or get you out of the career doldrums

The Job Forum  
235 Montgomery St., Mezzanine conference room  
Every Wednesday evening, 6:30-8:30  
Sponsored by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, The Job Forum provides job search networking and career support to professional job seekers in the San Francisco Bay Area.  
[thejobforum.org](http://thejobforum.org)  
Free for job seekers — See story in the Winter 2018 Semaphore.

## POETRY AT THE NORTH BEACH LIBRARY

Held every Tuesday evening in the historic literary epicenter of San Francisco, Tuesdays at North Beach is a free poetry series celebrating internationally acclaimed poets and showcasing local talent. Guests have included Jonathan Richman, David Meltzer, Diane di Prima, California Poet Laureate Al Young and freshly-discovered poets from Friends' sister program, Poets 11. The series is curated by Friends' Poet-in-Residence, Jack Hirschman.

Presented by Friends of the San Francisco Public Library.  
For more information, call Byron Spooner at 415-626-7500.



## NORTH BEACH CITIZENS WELCOMES VOLUNTEERS AND DONATIONS!

We are a community based non-profit organization that utilizes the strength of the neighborhood to effectively address the needs of homeless and low-income citizens through an innovative collaboration of residents, merchants, police, and service providers.

If you haven't stopped by lately, come visit our new headquarters at 1034 Kearny.

For hours, directions, and all other information:  
<http://www.northbeachcitizens.org/>  
(415) 772-0918



## NOONTIME CONCERTS

"San Francisco's Musical Lunch Break"  
FREE classical performances by outstanding local and international artists  
Every Tuesday, 12:30-1:15 PM (approximately)  
Old St. Mary's Cathedral, corner of California and Grant  
Admission is free; please make a \$5 donation if you can.  
<http://noontimeconcerts.org/>



## LOOKING OUT FOR OUR CHILDREN

The San Francisco Department of Child Support Services strives to ensure that all children receive the financial and medical support they need from their parents to be healthy and successful. Our resources include legal assistance; location of parents; establishment of paternity and support obligations; and enforcement of support orders.

Walk-in services are available at our main office, 617 Mission Street, 8 AM-5 PM Monday-Friday.  
Call (866) 901-3212 for more locations and information, or call (415) 356-2950 for a consultation.



## NORTH BEACH FARMERS MARKET

Now Open Every Saturday, 9 AM - 1 PM  
Corner of Columbus & Filbert, outside Piazza Pellegrini  
Drop by for sensational fresh organic produce, baked goods, beverages, and more! One-stop local shopping for home-grown kale & squash, Afghan bolani, hummus, French apple tart, seeded &/or sourdough bread, fresh-caught fish, olive oil, cider, and the sweetest berries you've ever tasted.



## NEXT Village SF continues its mission

of helping older adults in northeast SF to age-in-place, and be engaged, connected, and supported.

Do you have knowledge or skills to share? We're always looking for interesting speakers for our Live & Learn series. We also need volunteers to provide a little help with grocery shopping, transportation, and other light tasks. Help guide NEXT by serving on our board of directors, or with donations and corporate partnerships. Did you know only 7% of U.S. foundations support programs for seniors?

And mark your calendars for our 4th Annual Halloween Party, October 28th at the Italian Athletic Club, featuring a Beatles Tribute Band. In the meantime, you are welcome at our social, cultural, and educational events. For more information, go to [www.nextvillagesf.org](http://www.nextvillagesf.org), or e-mail [info@nextvillagesf.org](mailto:info@nextvillagesf.org), or call 415-888-2868.



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## PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Don Raichle, Committee Chair  
don.raichle@thd.org

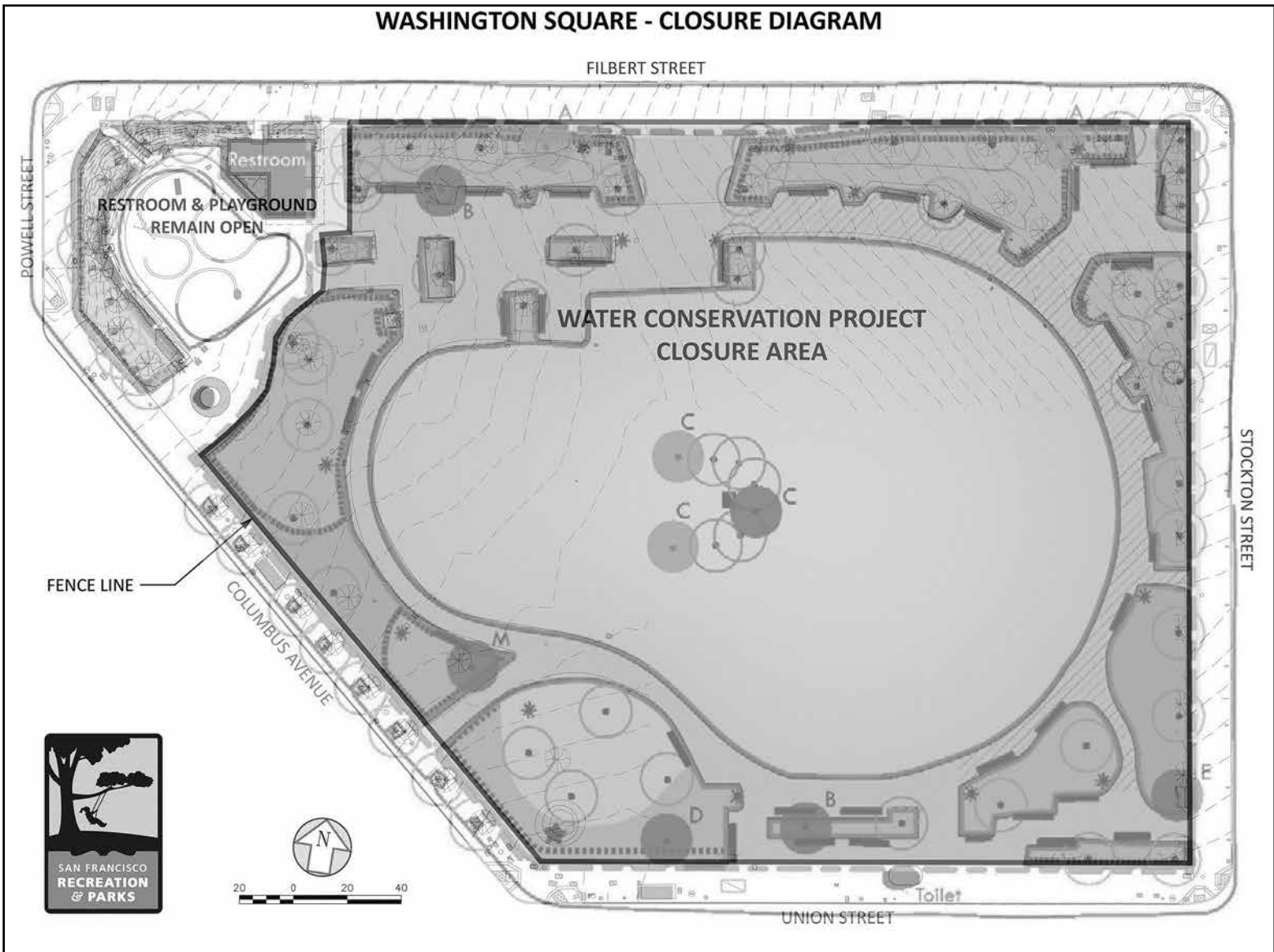
Telegraph Hill, and North Beach as a whole, has a unique and immediately identifiable character that is the foundation of the neighborhood's continuity and vitality. Essential to that character are the two iconic parks that, more often than not, we all take for granted. Pioneer Park surrounding Coit Tower, and Washington Square Park in the heart of historic North Beach, are major draws for tourists. They also serve the neighborhood as sources of pride, focal points, and much needed complements to the surrounding urban density. Because of this, whenever there is a proposed project within or adjacent to these parks, intense public concern and scrutiny is the result. Not surprisingly, the recently announced plan to initiate much needed repairs and upgrades to Washington Square has generated both anxiety about how the related construction will impact the neighborhood and relief that something is finally being done to make up for decades of deferred maintenance.

Change is not new to Washington Square. Since it was officially declared a public square in 1850 by San Francisco's first mayor, John W. Geary, it has been a pasture for goats, a cemetery, and a dumping ground. Eventually a formal park with diagonal pathways was created. While it primarily functioned as a circulation route for pedestrians, and occasionally horses, it also provided a temporary refuge from the City's major fires and a barracks site for soldiers after the 1906 earthquake.

In 1958 the park design we see today was prepared by Douglas Baylis, with an emphasis on creating a more organic public gathering space featuring a central lawn. Shortly thereafter, attempts began to create a parking garage below the park which would have inalterably changed its character and function. That effort was vetoed by then-mayor John Shelley. Since that time, initiatives have arisen to bring back up the parking garage idea and modify the park's design in a way that wouldn't reflect local needs and desires. To protect the integrity of the park as we know it, thanks to efforts by the Telegraph Hill Dwellers and other neighborhood activists, the park was declared a San Francisco Historic Landmark in 2000. This essentially precludes any future changes to the park that materially impact its design, appearance, and function.

Because of these efforts, residents and visitors alike enjoy the mature trees and lawn that have been preserved. However, on closer inspection, the impacts of neglected maintenance and patchwork repairs become more apparent. Over the years the park has struggled to be both a landscaped refuge and an intensely used public gathering space. Both uses are essential to the neighborhood,

# WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK: MAINTAINING A HISTORIC LANDMARK



but because of a lack of constant care and upkeep, the components we all cherish have continue to be degraded. Despite the critical importance of Washington Square, its maintenance and repairs have been regularly underfunded, and in recent years, some of the most important maintenance of the plantings has come from volunteers organized by the Friends of Washington Square.

Because of this, neighborhood groups (led by Friends of Washington Square) have advocated for the Recreation and Parks Department to address the deferred maintenance and damaged plantings. A plan has finally been identified and funded to do so. It includes repairing the leaking and damaged irrigation system, installing a new drainage system to improve the health and integrity of the lawn, and replacing the walkways that have been damaged over time and would otherwise receive more patching as a result of the planned work. At the same time, some trees identified as beyond their life cycle or as safety hazards will be replaced. The plan doesn't propose any changes to the design of the park. The anticipated schedule for this work is six months starting in early 2019 and after completion of the current construction of the Square's new playground.

An objective look at the proposed project confirms that it is needed, and that to continue to ignore the needed repairs will lead to continued degradation to the park's health. It is also clear more delay would lead to increased costs, potentially a longer period of construction if phased, and a growing possibility that the repairs never would occur at all. However, news of the planned construction and park closure has raised a number of legitimate concerns. Impacts to local businesses, displacement of the homeless who use the park, and lack of faith that the project will last just 6 months have all been raised. These, along with general fatigue

PROJECT SCOPE
<b>1. Irrigation System Replacement:</b> a. Reduce existing water use by two-thirds; from 3,308,760 gal./yr. to 1,080,007 gal./yr. b. Install weather sensing irrigation system c. Plant new drought-tolerant landscaping
<b>2. Drainage System Replacement:</b> a. Install new sub-drain infrastructure to reduce saturated soil conditions on site
<b>3. Pathway Improvement:</b> a. Repave existing pathways and make ADA improvements
<b>4. Anticipated Timeline:</b> Start Early 2019, 6 month closure
<i>*Restroom and playground will remain open during construction</i>

from ongoing construction over the last several years, business repercussions from the recent Union Street fire, and impacts from other non-local initiated projects (new public bathrooms on Union Street, Columbus Ave. tree removal, Washington Square Playground, etc.) have combined to distract from the proposed plan's benefits to the park and the neighborhood.

In the end, the stars seem to be aligned (for once) to address the park's critical needs, along with a funded plan which has taken years to achieve. At this time it is incumbent on the Recreation and Parks Department to provide clarity and public outreach regarding the project's intent and identify what mitigation measures it plans to take to address legitimate public concerns. As of this writing, a public meeting to present the plan to the neighborhood was scheduled for Wednesday, July 25, at the Joe DiMaggio Clubhouse. Rec and Park has posted more information on the project at <https://goo.gl/forms/xRzeU6kPi8ov82Sf1>.





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# SOCIAL & PROGRAM REPORT

by Bob Berryman, Committee Chair  
bob.berryman@thd.org

More than 50 Telegraph Hill Dwellers gathered to enjoy the afternoon of June 24 at Doors Open, a pop-up venue at the former Washington Square Bar and Grill. Friends reminisced and shared plans for summer while small parrots peered down from trees in the event space.

Thanks to the generosity of attendees, THD was able to make a \$500 contribution towards the Doors Open Project, which is providing employment and other support for those affected by the St. Patrick's Day fire that closed five businesses and heavily damaged the 600 block of Union Street.

Our next social event is being planned for late October. Watch The Semaphore, your e-mail, and THD's website (thd.org) for details.



Marilee and Anne-Marie are part of the Summer Social fun and fund-raising.

PHOTO © MARY ANN SCANLAN



Paul and Jen under a life-size pop-up tree at Doors Open.

PHOTO © MERLE GOLDSTONE



Doors Open, a pop-up at the former Washington Square Bar & Grill site, celebrated our neighborhood with colorful stuffed parrots in handmade trees.

PHOTO © BOB BERRYMAN



David and Carol kick off summer on a picnic bench.

PHOTO © MARY ANN SCANLAN

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## ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Anna Berryman, Committee Chair  
anna.berryman@thd.org

# CELEBRATE NORTH BEACH AUTHORS, AUGUST 14

Mark your calendar for this THD Special Event! Please join us on Tuesday, August 14, from 7-9 PM, for a fun evening of short readings from locally written books. Our neighborhood is famous for its literature -- what are Telegraph Hill and North Beach authors up to in 2018? Come find

out, when some of our top local writers read portions of their new books at the charming, literary-themed tavern Chief Sullivan's, 622 Green Street. Books will be available for purchase, signed for you by the author. Makes a unique gift!

The Authors: Mark Bittner, Anthony Gantner, Jon

Golinger, Tony Long, Judith Robinson, Richard Slota, B. Alexandra Szerlip, Terry Tarnoff, and CJ Verburg.

It will be a pleasant evening of literature, munchies, and good drinks (no host bar). RSVP to Anna at: [annagb@pacbell.net](mailto:annagb@pacbell.net)

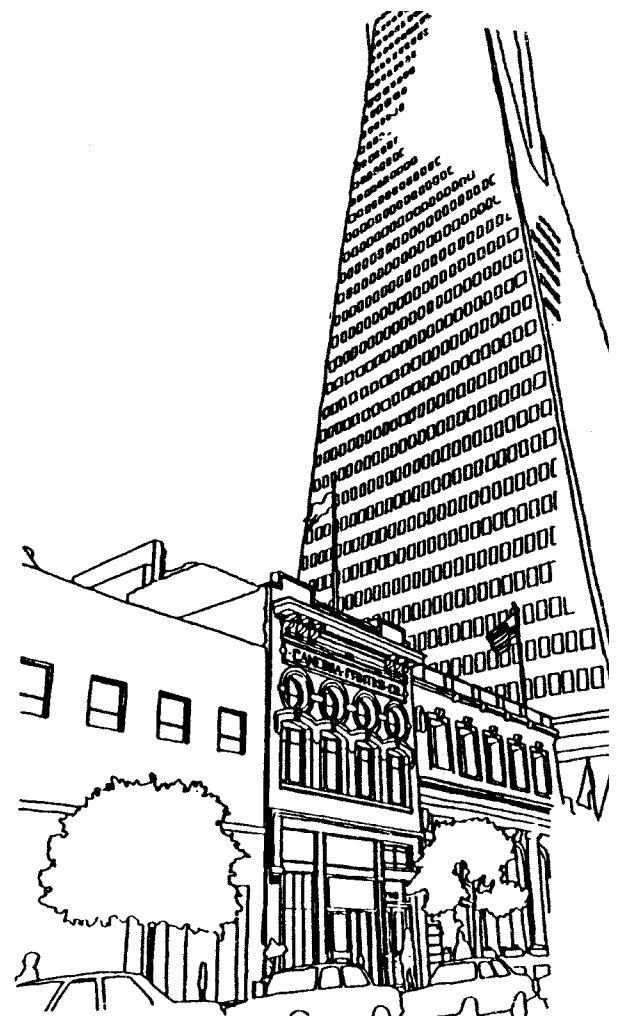


What better company for North Beach authors than the Irish poets, playwrights, and novelists on Chief Sullivan's wall?

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Meet on the 2nd Tuesday every month, with work parties in the Square every quarter. See website for times, dates, locations.

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# BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS, MARCH-MAY 2018

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary  
mary.lipian@thd.org

## MARCH 2018

### Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Chair Romalyn Schmaltz and Members Andy Katz, Al Fontes, Paul Webber, and Mary Lipian, informed the Board that the Committee had completed the slate of the 2018-2019 THD Board, with the exception of the Semaphore Editor.

### OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: Judy Irving\*  
VICE PRESIDENT: Romalyn Schmaltz\*  
RECORDING SECRETARY: Mary Lipian\*  
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: Mary Ann Scanlan-Stone\*  
TREASURER: Joe Luttrell\*  
FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Al Fontes\*  
HISTORIAN: Nancy Shanahan\*  
PAST PRESIDENT: Stan Hayes  
SEMAPHORE: Open Board Position

### DIRECTORS: TERM 2018-2020

Nick Ferris  
Leah Lovelace  
Don Raichle\*\*  
Paul Webber

### DIRECTORS: TERM 2018-2019

Cap Caplan  
Katie Hopkins\*\*  
Andy Katz\*\*  
Sarah Kliban

\* Incumbent nominated for re-election  
\*\* Director whose term has not yet expired

### Annual THD General Membership Meeting

The Annual Membership THD Membership Meeting and Dinner took place at 6 PM on Monday,



C. J. Schake, who gave us an insiders' tour of Coit Tower, with Phil Lumsden and Julie Herrod.  
ALL PHOTOS BY MERLE GOLDSTONE



Don Raichle, our Parks & Trees chair, new THD member Vinaya Vishwanath, and soon-to-be new Treasurer Nick Ferris.

April 23 at the South End Rowing Club, 500 Jefferson Street. The speaker was the photographer C.J. Schake, who spoke about "The Inner Tower: Working Inside Coit."

## APRIL 2018

### New THD Board Members Welcomed

Judy Irving welcomed the new Board members to the first meeting of the 2018-2019 year.

### Executive Committee

For the new year, the Executive Committee, which exists for the sole purpose of transacting emergency business that arises between Board Meetings, will comprise 5 members. Per the THD Bylaws, the existing ExCom included the President (Judy Irving), Vice President (Romalyn Schmaltz), and Treasurer (Joe Luttrell). After a motion was made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to add Historian Nancy Shanahan and Past President Stan Hayes, who are also part of the Planning & Zoning Committee, to the Executive Committee.

### New Art & Culture and Social Chairs

Anna Berryman will be the new Art & Culture Chair and Bob Berryman will be the new Social Chair. Naked Lunch has tentatively agreed to host an event soon with North Beach authors.

## MAY 2018

### Italian All Day Event

Nick Figone, Chief Operating Officer of the Italian Athletic Club, and Gianrico Pierucci, Fiesta Chairman of the Centennial Anniversary Concert in Washington Square Park, presented their proposed plans for a one-time concert in Washington Square Park immediately following this year's annual Italian Street Festival on September 15. The opening act will begin at 6:15 PM; performance #1 will begin at 7:00 PM; the headliner will begin at 8:00 PM; and all music will end by 9:00 PM.



"Frank's Texas Barbecue" preps a raved-about dinner at the South End Rowing Club.

Elizabeth Ashcroft  
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Nick Figone and Gianrico Pierucci informed the Board that they will be in full compliance with all permits, that there will be no alcohol served, and that there will be no vendors at the event.

Stockton between Filbert and Union will be closed, and the band will be set up on the Filbert side of Washington Square Park. 1,000 attendees are expected.

After the presentation concluded, the Board discussed the matter, and there was consensus that Judy Irving write a letter to the Italian Athletic Club in support of the event.

### THD 2018-2019 Budget Approved

A motion to approve the THD budget for the period of April 2018 through March 2019 was unanimously passed.

### Kathrin Moore Elected as AICP Fellow

THD congratulated Kathrin Moore on her election to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

### Opposition to Conditional Use Authorizations for Extension of Hours at 391 and 412 Broadway

Centerfolds and Penthouse Club are seeking to extend their closing hour from 2 AM to 4 AM. In 2016, a combined letter from Barbary Coast Neighborhood Association, The Golden Gate Tenant Association, Telegraph Hill Dwellers, 455 Vallejo Street Homeowners Association, and the Chinatown Community Development Corporation voiced opposition to this request. THD continues to communicate that disapproval and will monitor the issue closely.

### Transportation Alliance of San Francisco

The Board discussed whether or not to have THD join the Transportation Alliance of San Francisco ("TAOSF"). TAOSF will not be holding a meeting until September, so the decision whether or not to join the alliance is not urgent. After discussion, there was consensus that THD should not make a decision until after the San Francisco Mayoral election has taken place, as this will impact the approach that is needed. ✂



New board member Sarah Kliban and her son, Ben.

**To all our friends on Telegraph Hill:**  
Hanna and Rana Chedyak from  
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# TREASURER'S REPORT

by Joe Luttrell  
treasurer@thd.org

The THD fiscal year runs from April 1 through March 31, so this report is for just the first three months of THD's 2018-2019 fiscal year, that is, for the months of April, May and June 2018. THD aims for a break-even budget for its operations throughout the year, and the proposed budget adopted by the THD Board at its May meeting sought to achieve this goal. So far this fiscal year, that goal has essentially been achieved, with THD having a modest net income of \$2,748.13.



THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU  
Get involved in our neighborhood and make a difference!  
Join a THD committee and help keep the Hill a special place to live.

## STANDING COMMITTEES

Art & Culture: Anna Berryman (Chair) Contact Anna at [anna.berryman@thd.org](mailto:anna.berryman@thd.org)  
Budget: Joe Luttrell (Chair) Contact Joe at [joe.luttrell@thd.org](mailto:joe.luttrell@thd.org)  
Membership: Al Fontes (Chair) Contact Al at [THDmembership@gmail.com](mailto:THDmembership@gmail.com)  
Oral History Project: TBD  
Parking/Transportation/Subway: Michael Pedroni and Howard Wong  
Contact Michael at [michael.pedroni@thd.org](mailto:michael.pedroni@thd.org) or Howard at [howard.wong@thd.org](mailto:howard.wong@thd.org)  
Parks & Trees: Don Raichle (Chair) Contact Don at [don.raichle@thd.org](mailto:don.raichle@thd.org)  
Planning & Zoning: Mary Lipian and Stan Hayes (Co-Chairs) Contact Mary at [mary.lipian@thd.org](mailto:mary.lipian@thd.org) or Stan at [stan.hayes@thd.org](mailto:stan.hayes@thd.org)  
Semaphore: Contact: [semaphore@thd.org](mailto:semaphore@thd.org)  
Social & Program: Bob Berryman (Chair) Contact Bob at [bob.berryman@thd.org](mailto:bob.berryman@thd.org)  
Waterfront: Jon Golinger (Chair), Contact Jon at [jon.golinger@thd.org](mailto:jon.golinger@thd.org)  
Communications: Al Fontes, Katie Hopkins, Leah Lovelace, Sarah Kliban

PLANNING & ZONING COMMITTEE MEETS last Thursdays.  
Call for time and location. 986-7070, 563-3494, or 391-5652.

## LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Central Police District Community Advisory Board: Daryl Babbitt  
Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods: Paul Webber  
Friends of Washington Square Liaison: Marilee Gaffney  
Neighborhood Network Liaison: Gerry Crowley  
Northeast Waterfront Advisory Group Member: Jon Golinger

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Vice-President: Romalyn Schmaltz — [romalyn.schmaltz@thd.org](mailto:romalyn.schmaltz@thd.org)  
Recording Secretary: Mary Lipian — [mary.lipian@thd.org](mailto:mary.lipian@thd.org)  
Corresponding Secretary: Mary Ann Scanlan-Stone — [maryann.scanlan@thd.org](mailto:maryann.scanlan@thd.org)  
Treasurer: Joe Luttrell — [joe.luttrell@thd.org](mailto:joe.luttrell@thd.org)  
Financial Secretary: Al Fontes — [al.fontes@thd.org](mailto:al.fontes@thd.org)  
Historian: Nancy Shanahan — [nancy.shanahan@thd.org](mailto:nancy.shanahan@thd.org)  
Immediate Past President: Stan Hayes — [stan.hayes@thd.org](mailto:stan.hayes@thd.org)  
Editor of the Semaphore: Open Board Position

### DIRECTORS

#### Term: 2018-2019

Cap Caplan  
Katie Hopkins\*\*  
Andy Katz\*\*  
Sarah Kliban

#### Term: 2018-2020

Nick Ferris  
Leah Lovelace  
Don Raichle\*\*  
Paul Webber\*\*

\*\* Director whose term has not yet expired



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# THE SEMAPHORE

#222 Summer 2018

## FEATURES and COLUMNS

The Speakeasy: A Night in San Francisco's Roaring '20s  
by C J Verburg with Jean and Catz Forsman . . . . . 1

President's Corner: Coit Tower Nominated as National  
Monument by Judy Irving . . . . . 2

THD Welcomes Our New Board Members . . . . . 3

Swissnex . . . . . 3

Neighborhood Updates From the Heart of North Beach  
by Supervisor Aaron Peskin . . . . . 4

The Search For Beat Blvd & The Ghosts Of The North  
Beach Beats by Richard Slota . . . . . 5

Planning & Zoning Report by Stan Hayes . . . . . 7

Waterfront Report: Sea Changes by Jon Golinger . . . . . 7

North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District: Why  
So Many Vacancies?! by Nancy Shanahan . . . . . 8

Bulletin Board . . . . . 10

Parks & Trees Report: Washington Square by Don Raichle . . 11

Social & Program Report: THD Summer Social  
by Bob Berryman . . . . . 12

Art & Culture Report: Celebrating North Beach Authors,  
August 14 by Anna Berryman . . . . . 13

COVER: *San Francisco 1968* by David Schiller (Sparta Graphics)

## THD BUSINESS

Board Meeting Highlights by Mary Lipian . . . . . 14

Treasurer's Report by Joe Luttrell . . . . . 15

Board of Directors and Committees . . . . . 15

Become a Member. . . . . 15

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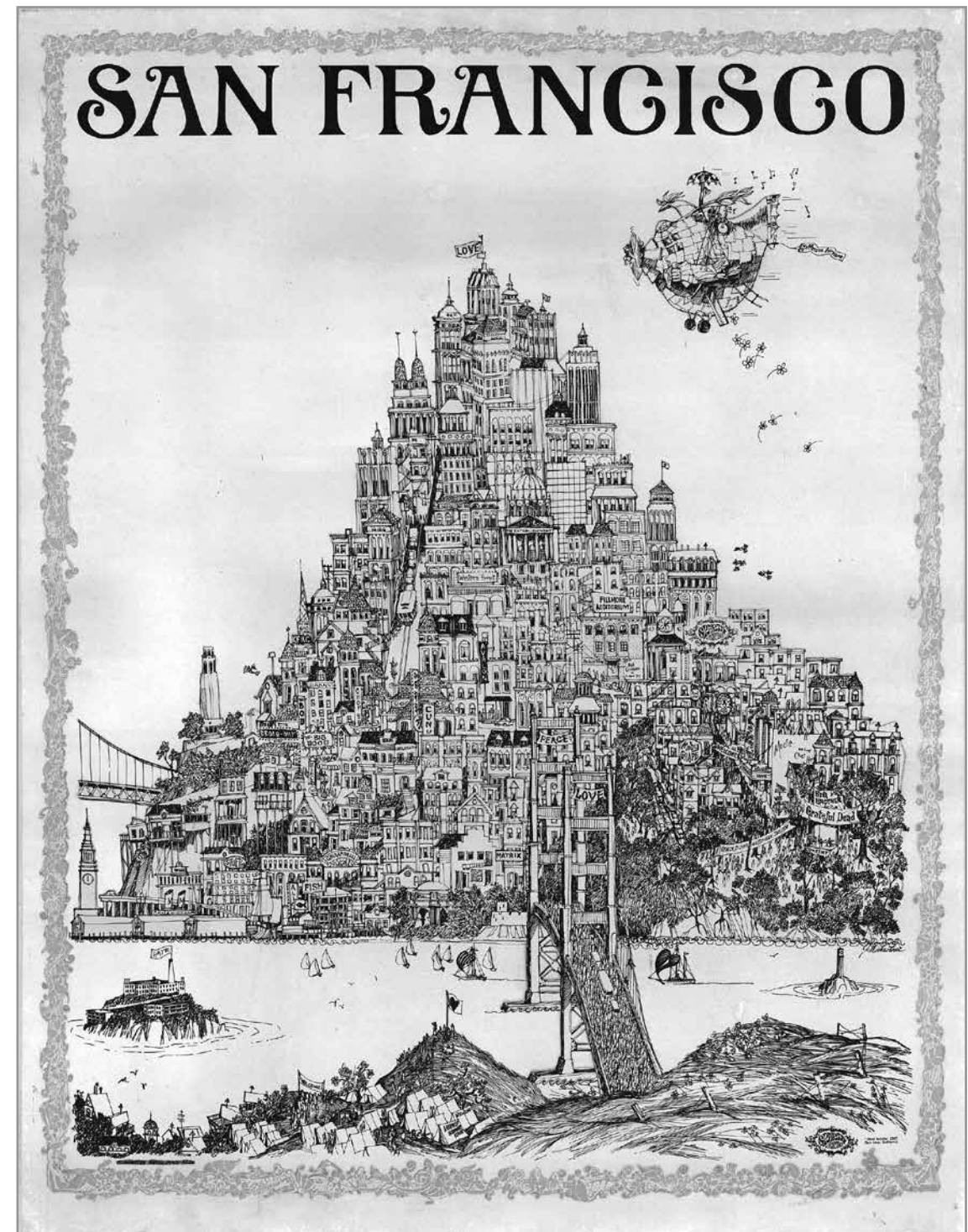
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# The Semaphore

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Issue 222

Summer 2018



WHERE DO WE COME FROM?  
WHERE ARE WE GOING?